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For a complete list of signatories in formation, please visit <http://www.letjusticeroll.org/pdfs/20070105NationalMinWageletter.pdf>

I am a member of NETWORK, A Catholic Social Justice Lobby, and I support S. 2, the Fair Minimum Wage Act of 2007—to increase to the minimum wage from \$5.15 to 7.25. Long overdue, this bill provides a first step towards a dignified life for low-wage workers in poverty. I urge you to support a “clean” bill to raise the federal minimum wage—one that does not attempt to add provisions of any kind and instead allows it to pass as a stand-alone issue.

Catholic Social Teaching reminds us that all persons are created by God, which is the basis for their dignity. In justice and to live with dignity, each human person working full time should be compensated enough to support him/herself and a family. It has been almost ten years since Congress voted to increase the minimum wage. Currently, a minimum wage employee who works 40 hours a week, 52 weeks in a year makes \$10,700 for that year. For a single parent with two children, that amount is thousands of dollars below the poverty line. This is unconscionable. Workers who provide security, clean hotels, wash dishes and haul supplies should not have to rely on charity or government assistance to get by. The proposed minimum wage increase to \$7.25 an hour (from \$5.15/hr.) would give an additional \$4,368 per year to a full-time worker making minimum wage. This would bring them a step closer to obtaining a livable wage which would provide for a family's basic needs: food, shelter, health care, clothing, education and recreation.

The minimum wage should be increased without any extra provisions or tax breaks in order avoid establishing such a precedent. Since the last minimum wage increase, congress has passed no fewer than five tax relief packages which have provided small businesses with up to \$36 billion in tax breaks. While congress has had no problem providing tax breaks for small businesses without considering raising the minimum wage, it seems impossible for some that the minimum wage be raised without a tax break for small businesses. Given the urgency of the minimum wage increase it is best to avoid linking it to other issues and pass it as a stand-alone “clean” bill.

The American people have spoken out on the urgency of this bill. With strong victories in all six minimum wage ballot initiatives this election, voters have shown concern for hardworking people in poverty. People who work full-time should earn enough to support themselves and their families. Consequently, I call on you to act justly, and challenge your other members to do the same. I urge you to quickly pass the minimum wage bill with no extra add-on provisions as it comes up this January.

Mr. KENNEDY. They mention Matthew's great teachings. The questioner says: When did I fail to treat you well? And the Lord says: When you failed to treat the least of these among us.

We are talking about a minimum wage, not an optimum wage. As the

charts show, it has declined dramatically over a period of years, now at \$5.15, far away from what it was in the 1960s and 1970s, right through the 1980s. We believe that in this country, with the strongest economy in the world, people who work hard 40 hours a week, 52 weeks of the year, should not have to live in poverty. An increase in the minimum wage is long overdue. Hopefully, we will have an opportunity in this body to express our views on this in the near future.

If there are no further speakers, I suggest that we recess, according to the leadership's earlier request.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will stand in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, at 12:25 p.m., the Senate recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. CARPER).

FAIR MINIMUM WAGE ACT OF 2007—Continued

AMENDMENT NO. 103

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there are now 30 minutes equally divided on amendment No. 103, as modified. Who yields time?

The Senator from Wyoming is recognized.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I yield myself 3 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is recognized for 3 minutes.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I rise today in support of the amendment offered by Senator SNOWE, Senator LANDRIEU, and others, to provide regulatory assistance to our Nation's small businesses.

This amendment requires that when Federal agencies issue new rules and regulations that impact small business, they also must issue compliance guides for small businesses. The amendment also requires that the compliance guides be written in plain English and made available in a timely manner.

I think this is a commonsense requirement. It not only reduces the administrative costs for small business, but it also increases the level of compliance with such new rules and regulations. I think the work opportunity tax credit is an example. That isn't a program that a lot of small businesses have taken advantage of. Part of it is because they don't know about it, and part is they don't know how to comply with it. They don't have the opportunity to hire the specialists that might be needed to understand it or to do the recordkeeping on it. So they don't take advantage of it to the level they could. It is a provision in the tax bill that could make quite a difference to small employers.

Many small employers simply lack the resources, the outside consultants, the experts necessary to continually advise them of changes in Federal rules

that impact the way they must run their business. As it now stands, smaller businesses currently pay disproportionate per employee compliance costs when compared to larger employers. The average per employee cost for Federal regulatory compliance in a business with less than 20 employees is 45 percent higher than the same cost for a business with 500 or more employees. So it is about \$7,600 for a small business to comply versus \$5,200 for a big business to comply. Those numbers stagger me—the cost for small business to comply with Federal rules and regulations. That doesn't count the cost of complying with the Tax Code, which is a whole other range of costs.

Cost mandates, such as a minimum wage increase, impose significant financial burdens on our small employers. We must do everything we can to help alleviate this burden and ensure that small businesses remain the well-run engine of our economy, and providing the kind of compliance assistance called for in Senator SNOWE's amendment is one of the ways we can assist small businesses in meeting the administrative costs associated with Federal regulation.

I commend Senator SNOWE for her efforts on behalf of small businesses and am proud to be a cosponsor of this legislation with her. She has put in diligent efforts to hold hearings and get this into place in the committee that she chaired, the Small Business Committee, on which she is now the ranking member.

I urge my colleagues to support this amendment that not only provides assistance that reduces employer costs but also assistance that increases employer compliance. That is two goals. This amendment will do both of those. I ask for your support.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum, and I ask unanimous consent that the time be equally divided between the sides.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, we still anticipate a vote at 2:45 p.m. As I mentioned, we are going to urge the Senate to accept the amendment offered by Senator SNOWE. I think it is an important contribution to small businesses and their understanding of the kinds of rules and regulations that have been out there and do it in ways that are understandable and in a timely way and to ensure that the relevant committee is going to find out how that is being implemented. We are certainly in strong support of that concept and idea. I commend those who have been involved in it.